

NEW-YORK DAILY TRIBUNE, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1884

6

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

STODDARD'S LINCOLN.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: The Story of a Great Life. By WILLIAM G. STODDARD, one of President Lincoln's secretaries during the War of the Rebellion. \$7.00. Forney, Howard & Hubert.

This new biography is announced as "the People's Life of Lincoln," and both in the advertisements of the publishers and in Mr. Stoddard's own text, marked emphasis is laid upon the endeavor to make the narrative acceptable to the great popular majority. With this end in view the author has undertaken to exhibit the personal character of his subject without the history of his public career. An outline sketch of Mr. Lincoln's Presidency was unavoidable, but Mr. Stoddard has made it as slight as he could, merely mentioning some of the salient military events (chiefly those with which the Army of the Potomac was connected), and hardly touching upon the political developments of that great period. Thus he seems to believe that he has secured space and opportunity to consider at full length the growth and the elements of Mr. Lincoln's character, and the gradual strengthening and expanding of the qualities which made him the leader of an heroic epoch. A part of this task Mr. Stoddard has done well. His account of Mr. Lincoln's youth is very striking, and he gives a minute and interesting narrative of the slow and careful steps by which he fitted himself for political life. He brings out distinctly Mr. Lincoln's sagacity and patience in the critical periods of great enterprises; he explains admirably his intimate acquaintance with the popular sentiment and disposition, and shows what shrewd use was made of this knowledge; and he sets in a strong light the President's patriotism, unselfishness, tenderness, and religious spirit. We cannot say that all this is done with good taste. The first two or three chapters, in which the narrative is thrown into the form of a dialect story, abounding in imaginary conversations between young Abe and his literary relatives, are flagrant offences against literary propriety. It was open to Mr. Stoddard to write either history or fiction, but not to combine the two in what looks like a travesty upon biography. The picture moreover of the small life in Lincoln's early homes is in a questionable style of art—chromo wood-painting perhaps it might be called—and more than once the longing for effect has led the author astray. For example, on page 21 there is a plain intimation that perhaps Lincoln's father stole the horses by which the family were transported from Kentucky to Indiana. No doubt Tom Lincoln was a good specimen of the shiftless mean white; but to say that perhaps he was a horse-thief, notwithstanding his position as a husband and father, is abusing the privileges of the biographer. Several of the references to the President's wife are objectionable. There is a domestic privacy into which even the writers of books have no business to intrude, but Mr. Stoddard's greatest mistake was his plan. It is impossible to separate the personal life of a man in Lincoln's position from his public life. If it could have been done in the case of any other President it could not have been done in the case of Abraham Lincoln, whose personal character was so profoundly modified by historical events, and exerted in turn so strong an influence upon the course of national affairs. The ideal life of Lincoln would show how his nature expanded and ripened under the stimulus of an extraordinary time; how the political revolution which aroused the passions and darkened the understandings of experienced and distinguished statesmen, only called forth the highest powers of his mind and the noblest impulses of his heart; how he rose with the tide of circumstance, and as he was brought face to face with greater trials became every day a greater man, until the world felt instinctively that he was truly the leader of the purest and most heroic aspiration in the American people. The only conceivable way the nobility of his individual character had become impressed upon one of the grandest pages in American history. But to show all this, the biographer must exhibit the man and his work together, each acting and reacting upon the other. Lincoln, if factitious, makes a figure in history, had no personal life distinguishable from his public life; it is hardly going too far to say that as President he had no individuality which can be studied apart from the story of his administration.

ANNOUCHKA. A Tale by JEVY SIEGERTHEIT TURNER. Translated from the French of the Author's own Translation by FRANCIS ALBERT. 12mo. pp. 111. Cupples, Upham & Co.

We should hesitate to give so slight a sketch as this even the modest designation of "a tale," for a tale at least supposes progress in the action and some positive conclusion, and "Annouchka" has neither. It is a character-piece, the key to which is found in a social problem which the author, after his familiar manner, states without attempting to solve it. Short and slight as it is, however, it is a fine bit of work. The figures are drawn with a firm and bold hand; the landscape and background are managed with remarkable delicacy; and up to a certain point the sketch has a charmingly poetical quality. Then unfortunately the charm is suddenly marred. The incident upon which the story turns is natural, so far as the action of the woman is concerned in it, but in the conduct of the man there is a rough, hard strain for which the sentiment of the preceding pages has not prepared us; and in the accessories there is some gratuitously coarse suggestion which seems to us entirely French. The ending is just right. To have made it more complete would have been to spoil it.

We have received Part I., Volume XIV., of the Annals of the Astronomical Observatory of Harvard College. This volume consists of observations with the meridian photometer during the years 1879-82, by Director Edward C. Pickering, aided by Arthur Searle and Oliver C. Wendell, assistants in the observatory. The object of the inquiry is to ascertain the comparative brightness of the stars by photographic methods. Mr. Pickering at present deals with stars not fainter than the sixth magnitude, which could be conveniently observed in the latitude of the observatory. In consequence of errors in the catalogues used "many of the stars included in the present work are no doubt fainter than others which have been included; but if any stars are omitted which should actually be regarded as of the sixth magnitude, they must have been underestimated in all these catalogues." The invention of the meridian photometer was difficult, and the instrument, a full description of which, with plates, is given, is very ingenious and effective. The work throughout bears marks of the care and thoroughness which astronomers have become accustomed to expect in all the publications of the Harvard College Observatory under the superintendence of Director Pickering.

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